

If Puerto Rico desires statehood, I cannot identify any moral basis upon which Congress could decline that petition, especially in light of the enormous contribution that island residents have made in our Armed Forces over generations. How could the U.S. Government, a champion of democracy and self-determination around the world, disregard those principles with respect to its own citizens without losing credibility at home and abroad?

The second reason that statehood is in the national interest is economic. Last year, the GAO published a report about the fiscal impact of statehood on the Federal Government. The report confirms that statehood will enhance quality of life in Puerto Rico, but it also alleviates any concern that statehood would have an adverse impact on the U.S. Treasury. As the GAO explains, new Federal outlays to Puerto Rico would be significantly counterbalanced by new Federal revenues generated from the island.

The truth is this: this Nation will benefit when Puerto Rico's economic economy is strong, when its residents do not need to move to the States to achieve their dreams or vote for their national leaders, when individuals in businesses on the island flourish, and when the corporate and individual tax base expands. The U.S. stands to gain from the state of Puerto Rico's success, just as it currently pays a severe price for the territory's shortcomings.

Finally, let me turn to the political dimensions of this debate. The evidence indicates that either national party could be competitive on the island. I am a proud Democrat, but the pro-statehood party I lead includes hundreds of thousands of equally proud Republicans. Voters in Puerto Rico have elected two Republican Governors and numerous Republican senators, representatives, and mayors at the local level. I can say to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle that they should not view the prospective State of Puerto Rico as either a blessing or a curse for their party's fortunes but, rather, as an opportunity.

Statehood is not only in Puerto Rico's interests; it is also in the national interests. Statehood will make Puerto Rico stronger, and it will make the United States a more perfect Union.

God bless Puerto Rico, the next State of the United States of America.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 43 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: God of the universe, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

Lord, You have promised to be with all people wherever they are, whatever their need. We reach out in prayer for the homeless, the poor, those anxious about the future, those who are ill, or those to whom freedom has been denied.

Bless the Members of this people's House. Inspire them, as representatives of the American people, to labor for justice and righteousness in our Nation and our world, mindful of Your concern for those most in need.

For all the riches of our human experience, O Lord, we give You thanks. Make us aware of our responsibilities, as stewards of Your divine gifts, and empower us with Your grace to faithfully and earnestly use our talents in ways that bring understanding to our communities and to our Nation, and peace to every soul.

May all we do be done for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. CARTWRIGHT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. CARTWRIGHT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

A GREAT IDEA: 529 PLANS

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I believe in an opportunity economy, where hard work, education, innovation, and risk are rewarded, and we empower individuals, not government.

Imagine what determination and a degree can do for today's young people, provided they have a variety of choices to meet their needs and good information about the investment they are making.

Paying for college is hard work, and it is getting more difficult as tuition and fees continue to increase at rapid rates. Luckily, American families have an investment tool known as a 529 plan to help them save for their child's college education.

Last week, the House approved bipartisan legislation to expand, strengthen, and improve 529 plans, which nearly 12 million families have utilized to help plan for their child's education.

With student loan debt surpassing credit card debt, we need to do everything we can to encourage American families to save for college and invest in their child's future.

MANUFACTURED POLITICAL CRISES

(Mr. KILDEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Democrats in the House stood united to ensure that the Department of Homeland Security was funded for the remainder of the year.

After bringing our Nation's security and public safety to the brink of shutdown twice in the last 2 weeks, the Speaker finally relented and allowed the will of the majority of the House of Representatives to be heard on the floor. All Democrats and a good number of responsible Members on the other side joined together to make sure that Homeland Security was funded for the remainder of the year.

It is completely unacceptable that we have seen, since this Congress has convened, manufactured political crises that divert us away from the real issues that the American people want us to take up.

Americans at home are worried about making ends meet. They work harder and harder and can't seem to get ahead. They can't seem to save for retirement. They can't guarantee that their young kids are going to have the opportunity to attend college. That is what they want us to take up.

We cannot continue manufactured political crises intended to pander to the most extreme voices in this body.

BINYAMIN NETANYAHU'S ADDRESS TO CONGRESS

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, it was an honor to have Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu speak to a joint session of Congress yesterday. Israel is one of our country's closest allies, an essential partner in restraining Iran's nuclear threat and combating